

MAR 23 1962

Approved For Release 1999/09/16 : CIA-RDP70-00058R0

CHARLOTTE, N.C.
NEWS

EVENING 64,075

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The Plain Truth (So To Speak...)

STATINTL

Since the relatively blissful administration of President George Washington, Americans have often had cause to wonder about the great gulf which separates a politician's words from his innermost thoughts.

There is no solution to this, short of shooting every politician who lies, but examples of the disparity continually crop up in the published apologies of our political brethren.

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The latest example is Richard Nixon's early autobiography (he's only 49) entitled "Six Crises." Even friends of Mr. Nixon would agree that the former vice president has undergone at least six crises, possibly more. But the events he records are helpful in jousting with a seemingly eternal problem: what really is the truth in the political world? Is fact truth? Or is truth compounded of factors which the general public cannot understand or swallow? Why this continual hocus-pocus?

In "Six Crises," Mr. Nixon speaks of President Kennedy's "foolish" use of the Cuban problem during the 1960 campaign. Kennedy said then that the Cuban exiles, "who offer eventual hope of overthrowing Castro, should be given American aid."

Mr. Nixon believed his opponent has been told of the preparations for Cuban invasion during a "policy briefing" in October. Despite this, says Nixon, Mr. Kennedy allowed that, "thus far, these (Cuban) fighters for freedom have had virtually no support from our government."

Allen Dulles has since denied saying anything to President Kennedy about the preparations for a Cuban invasion. But at the time, Mr. Nixon was quite angry. Not only had he been bested by the Boston

strong-boy, he had been forced into the not unfamiliar position of supporting a stand directly contrary to his real feelings:

"There was only one thing I could do," Nixon writes. "The covert operation (involving CIA and the Cuban refugees) had to be protected at all costs. I must not even suggest by implication that the United States is rendering aid to rebel forces in and out of Cuba. In fact, I must go to the other extreme: I must attack the Kennedy proposal to provide such aid..."

This Nixon did in the fourth debate despite the fact that, according to his book, "the covert training of Cuban exiles as well as the new covert quarantine on policy were programs due, in substantial part at least, to my efforts."

Here, it seems, we go again. Which version is the less truthful one? Did Allen Dulles really not, as he says, tell Mr. Kennedy about the invasion plans? Did Mr. Kennedy suspect, with his New England caniness, that there were such plans afoot? Will Mr. Nixon ever find happiness? Where do we tune in next to follow this gripping saga of high-level veracity?

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One must wonder, at the risk of being naive, what values are inherent in the now-it-must-be-told game. Failure to gain the highest political office by a scant margin must certainly eat at Mr. Nixon. But during his subjective examination of the campaign, Americans are forced to sift once again through facts and truths which may not really be facts and truths, which may, in fact, be only more of the elegaic pap usually spoken over lost and buried causes.

Who knows? Or better still — who half-knows?